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SUBJECT: TURKEY REMAINS COMMITTED TO JOINT STRIKE FIGHTER PROJECT

REF: NOVEMBER 10 EDITION OF JANE'S DEFENSE WEEKLY

1. Dr. Faruk Ozlu, Deputy Undersecretary of Turkey's national defense procurement agency (Savunma Sanayii Mustesarligi - SSM), in a November 12 discussion with PolMilCouns and Deputy PolMilCouns, dismissed press reports (including reftel) that Turkey was considering withdrawal from the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) program due to unhappiness with Turkey's workshare. According to Ozlu, Turkey was reviewing its current Air Force fleet, comprised of F-4 and F-16 jets, in anticipation of a potential procurement of up to 100 JSF planes, to determine how many F-4s and F-16s should be upgraded to meet Turkey's interim needs before the first JSF planes roll off the assembly line in 2015, and to finalize the number of JSFs it would need and the timing of their delivery. (Comment: Current JSF SDD phase program planning calls for Turkish aircraft deliveries to start in 2013. Actual production deliveries will be determined when the JSF US/Turkish Bilateral production and sustainment MOU is negotiated and signed. End Comment.) Turkey had already signed an LOA with the US for an F-16 upgrade. The government would like to upgrade some of its F-4 fleet but no decision had been made on whether to extend the current contract with Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI) or to seek new proposals. Turkish Air Force Command (TAFC) favored extending the IAI contract while SSM was arguing that the additional work should be put out for competitive bids. In the end, the government would decide, he said.

2. (SBU) Ozlu said it would be difficult for Turkey to leave the JSF program at this point, but did acknowledge the government's unhappiness with its current JSF workshare. Compared to other countries, including Italy and the Netherlands, Ozlu recognized Turkish industry was at a disadvantage. Nonetheless, he stated that Turkey considered its current JSF workshare to be the "weak point" in its participation. Recognizing that a potential government expenditure of eight billion dollars on JSF planes would create difficulties for the government if the Turkish workshare was inadequate, SSM was working with Turkish firms to increase their competitiveness

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